

not on our side; we cannot afford to delay any longer or defer to the obstructionist tactics of brutal regimes. The people of Sudan deserve more than our outrage; they deserve our action. And the time to act is now.

THE NEED FOR REAUTHORIZATION OF PUBLIC LAW 106-393

Mr. CRAIG. Mr. President, I rise to make a few comments regarding the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act, or County Payments Act as it has been nicknamed.

Today is a sad day for the 780 counties that benefit from the County Payments Act because with the last day of this fiscal year, the act expires.

In 2000, the Congress passed Public Law 106-393 to address the needs of the forest counties of America and to focus on creating a new cooperative partnership between citizens in forest counties and our Federal land management to develop forest health improvement projects on public lands and simultaneously stimulate job development and community economic stability.

The act has been an enormous success in achieving and even surpassing the goals of Congress. This act has restored programs for students in rural schools and prevented the closure of numerous isolated rural schools. It has been a primary funding mechanism to provide rural school students with educational opportunities comparable to suburban and urban students. Over 4,400 rural schools receive funds because of this act.

Next, the act has allowed rural county road districts and county road departments to address the severe maintenance backlog. Snow removal has been restored for citizens, tourists, and school buses. Bridges have been upgraded and replaced and culverts that are hazardous to fish passage have been upgraded and replaced.

In addition, over 70 Resource Advisory Committees, or RACs have been formed. These RACs cover our largest 150 forest counties. Nationally these 15-person diverse RAC stakeholder committees have studied and approved over 2,500 projects on Federal forestlands and adjacent public and private lands. These projects have addressed a wide variety of improvements drastically needed on our national forests. Projects have included fuels reduction, habitat improvement, watershed restoration, road maintenance and rehabilitation, reforestation, campground and trail improvement, and noxious weed eradication.

RACs are a new and powerful partnership between county governments and the land management agencies. They are rapidly building the capacity for collaborative public land management decisionmaking in over 150 of our largest forest counties in America and are reducing the gridlock over public land management, community by community.

The legacy of this act over the last few years is positive and substantial. This law should be extended so it can continue to benefit the forest counties, their schools, and continue to contribute to improving the health of our national forests.

If we do not work to reauthorize this act, all of the progress of the last 6 years will be lost. Schools in timber-dependent communities will lose a substantial part of their funding. These school districts will have to start making tough budget decisions such as keeping or canceling after school programs, sports programs, music programs, and trying to determine what is the basic educational needs of our children. Next, counties will have to reprioritize road maintenance so that only the essential services of the county are met because that is all they will be able to afford.

Thirty of our colleagues have joined Mr. WYDEN and myself in recognizing the importance of the reauthorization of this act by cosponsoring S. 267. And while we have run out of time in this fiscal year, I look forward to working with my colleagues in the lameduck session to address this issue.

REMEMBERING NATIONAL PUBLIC LANDS DAY

Mr. CRAIG. Mr. President, on September 30, will once again observe National Public Lands Day. For the 13th straight year, thousands of citizens across the country help clean up public parks, rivers, lakes, forests, rangelands, and beaches. These volunteers will hit the ground running and spruce up trails, build bridges, plant trees, and much more. I commend each and everyone of them for their important public service. Their work inspires us to step back and consider just what our public lands mean to us.

Almost 100 years ago, the great conservationist President Teddy Roosevelt addressed a special session of Congress on the subject of our natural resources and spoke words that should be listened to carefully by everyone who has an interest in keeping the United States the most prosperous and dynamic nation on the face of the Earth. "These resources, which form the common basis of our welfare, can be wisely developed, rightly used, and prudently conserved only by the common action of all the people . . ." Listen to those words and notice the wise approach of a man considered one of our most radical conservationists, a President who put 234 million acres into the public trust. This is not a man who lived on the ideological extremes. He did not advocate roping off all the land and allowing no admittance. Nor would he stand by and let the land be ransacked and misused. Let me speak again his words: ". . . wisely developed, rightly used, and prudently conserved . . ." That approach was correct in 1909, and it is the right one now.

Today's younger generation understands that our natural resources are

not limitless, that we can not endlessly exploit them. They are more environmentally savvy perhaps than their parents. And I believe they also grasp the need for smart conservation, for devising collaborative policies that ensure public access to public land now and in the future.

Some lands ought to have restrictions on use. I do not dispute that, and I do not advocate any careless "roll-back" of environmental regulations. But this is not a time to exact an economic toll on our country by ignoring the resources available for use in our public lands. It is a time to tap into our ingenuity and devise ways to utilize them while responsibly mitigating any environmental impact. This is not an insurmountable challenge; Americans have accomplished more difficult tasks in our history.

Lastly, I would like to emphasize the issue of public ownership. These lands are owned by the people. We policymakers need to always keep that in mind and not just pay this fact lip-service. National Public Lands Day is a perfect time to remind ourselves who owns this land. We must be flexible with the different types of recreation and access to public land that people want.

Mr. President, in closing, let me add that Americans have always had a strong relationship with public lands and have always understood the need to preserve them for posterity. Sometimes we hear it said that people only care for what they themselves privately owned that what is held in common will often fall into disrepair. The work that will be accomplished this September 30th disproves that idea. And I am optimistic that future generations will be enjoying the same public lands we do today.

NOMINATION OF RICHARD HOAGLAND

Mr. ENSIGN. Mr. President, I rise to speak today about an issue of great importance to the Armenian community, the nomination of Richard Hoagland to be the next U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Armenia.

I respect the office of the President and the powers that are granted to appoint individuals that are in support of the administration's agenda; however, there is justifiable concern about the recall of our Ambassador to a regionally important country and the subsequent nomination of his replacement. The reported reason for the recall of Ambassador Evans revolves around the failure of our Government to officially recognize the Armenian genocide. That is unacceptable.

Once again, I want to go on record as being opposed to the continued denial of the Armenian genocide. The bigger issue is not that of an appointment of this or any official who recognizes his duties and will be diligent in carrying them out but of acknowledging the genocide as part of an appropriate foreign policy.

I have long sought to bring recognition to the crimes perpetuated against the Armenian people as genocide. In fact, I have introduced S. Res. 320, which affirms the Armenian genocide. The resolution calls on the President to state that the slaughter of Armenians by the Ottoman Empire was genocide and to recall the proud history of U.S. intervention in opposition to the Armenian genocide. It is important that the U.S. once and for all reaffirms the incontestable facts of history and allows our representatives to speak out about the crimes perpetuated against the Armenian people from 1915 to 1923. It is my sincere hope that this legislation comes before the full Senate soon.

As we fight to ensure freedom around the globe, we must ensure that our future reflects the lessons of the past. In this case the facts are incontestable. Armenians were subjected to deportation, expropriation, abduction, torture, massacre, and starvation. Yes, the Armenian people were victims of genocide. Genocide at any time, at any place, is wrong and needs to be confronted and remembered.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, as the Republican leadership gavels this session to a close, I am disappointed by the inaction and missed opportunities on America's most crucial priorities.

First, although we did finally pass a long overdue port security bill, we still have a long way to go to protect our infrastructure. We knew before 9/11 that our ports are soft targets, and since that terrible day, many experts have continued to warn us that they are vulnerable to attack.

Since the 9/11 attacks, we have spent only \$984 million on port security grants, despite Coast Guard estimates that \$5.4 billion is needed over 10 years. That total includes the grants that were released this week.

To make matters worse, port security funds aren't reaching the ports that need them the most. In California, port security grants awarded by the Bush administration have fallen from \$33.3 million in fiscal year 2005 to \$13.3 million in fiscal year 2006, a staggering 60 percent reduction. Despite the fact that California's ports carry over 47 percent of all goods imported into the United States, we are receiving only eight percent of the total port security grants funding.

In addition, the final port security bill lacks the Senate-passed transit and rail security provisions. The last three major attacks have been on transit systems in Madrid, London, and in July, Mumbai. According to APTA, there are \$6 billion in transit security needs across the country. But last year, Congress appropriated only \$150 million for transit and rail security. That is barely a drop in the bucket. Americans take 33 million trips on transit each day. We must do more to protect them.

The Senate bill also does not consider aviation security. Yes, aviation security has improved greatly in the last five years. But five years after 9/11, we are still not screening cargo loaded on board passenger planes. I am pleased that DHS will launch a pilot program at San Francisco Airport, SFO, this October to check all commercial cargo for explosives on passenger flights, but we should be doing this at every airport in America to ensure the safety of passengers and the solvency of the airline industry.

But until that time, at the very least, we need to use at least one blast resistant cargo container on passenger planes that carry cargo. This was one of the major recommendations of the 9/11 Commission. When I tried to offer an amendment to do just that, the Republican managers of the bill blocked my amendment.

Cost is not the problem here. The price to place one blast-resistant container on planes is about \$75 million or a little more than the price of 5 hours in Iraq. The American people deserve to know that we are doing everything we can to keep them safe. We cannot allow terrorists to exploit holes in our aviation security system.

Second, although we passed border fence legislation, we failed to act on the AgJOBS bill, which would provide a much-needed solution to the farm labor shortage crisis that is threatening our nation's farm economy. In California and across America, fruit and vegetables are dying on the vine and rotting in the fields because there are no workers to harvest the crops.

Earlier today, my friend from Georgia, Senator CHAMBLISS, came to the floor to speak against the AgJOBS bill. He said that as he has traveled the country this year holding farm bill hearings, every farmer he met told him to oppose AgJOBS.

Yet, if the Senator from Georgia had come to California, our Nation's largest agricultural State, he would have heard from farmers who desperately need and want the AgJobs bill passed now. And they are not alone. Farmers in States experiencing labor shortages in Idaho, Washington, New York and Florida, among others, want this bill, as do a broad coalition of pro-agriculture groups.

The H-2A program is badly in need of reform, and the AgJOBS bill, which the Senate has already passed with more than 60 votes, enacts those meaningful reforms. These AgJobs will save users money, simplify the program, streamline the litigation process, and bring stability to our nation's agricultural work force.

And third, we also failed to stand up for fair and smooth elections. On Tuesday, Senators DODD, FEINGOLD and I introduced the Confidence in Voting Act of 2006, S. 3943, a simple bill that would reimburse electoral jurisdictions for the cost of contingency paper ballots for the General Election. Under the bill, the jurisdictions would be reim-

bursed for their documented costs up to \$0.75 per contingency paper ballot printed.

This bill is timely in light of the recent problems with voting machines in Maryland, Illinois, Ohio and other states. It is clear that many jurisdictions that use electronic voting machines and other voting systems will need to have a backup plan for the upcoming November 7, 2006, general election.

The Confidence in Voting Act of 2006 would work within the existing structure of the Help America Vote Act of 2002 to provide reimbursement funding for jurisdictions that provide a contingency paper ballot in addition to their existing voting system. The estimated maximum cost of this measure is approximately \$15 million a small price to pay to ensure that every American's vote is counted.

The American people deserve better. We face great challenges that will determine our safety and prosperity for years to come. I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting long overdue legislation for the security of our infrastructure, to aid our farmers, and to ensure our right to fair and accountable elections.

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE SURVIVOR BENEFITS PLAN

Mr. NELSON of Florida. Mr. President, although we have accomplished much to be proud of in this Defense authorization bill, I am profoundly disappointed that once again we have failed to eliminate the SBP-DIC offset.

For the last 5 years I have been talking about the unfair and painful offset of the Defense Department's survivors benefits plan against Veterans Affairs' dependency and indemnity compensation, or DIC. This offset mistreats the survivors of our servicemembers who die on active duty now and our 100 percent disabled military retirees who purchased this benefit at the end of their careers. It is wrong, we know it, and the Senate has tried to fix it—but we have fallen short again.

I have reminded the Senate of the Good Book's words, that in God's eyes the true measure of our faith is how we look after orphans and widows in their distress. And they are in distress. We are in a violent struggle around the world with brutal and vicious enemies. Sadly, Americans are lost every day.

We must never forget that the families left behind by our courageous men and women in uniform bear the greatest pain. Their survivors' lives are forever altered; their futures left unclear. They suffer the enduring cost of the ultimate sacrifice, and the Nation that asked for that sacrifice must honor it. We are the ones who must recognize that the Nation has an obligation to those who give their lives for our country.

This conference report does not include the Senate's provision to eliminate this offset. In the Senate, we included the funds necessary to support